



Newsblast

April 17, 2024

Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone! We hope this spring is treating you well. There are a number of workshops and opportunity we are excited to share with you in this newsblast. We hope you enjoy!

The Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition is a state-wide and coalition-based Extension program, housed in Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education. Funding is sponsored by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Award #2020-49400-32326. This funding is led by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program.

Partner Highlight

Are you an experienced grazer ready to guide the next generation? Or perhaps a newcomer to the grazing world and eager to learn the ropes? The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council has two exciting mentor programs in Virginia that might be just the thing for you! Find out more information in their [informational letter](#) or join us on May 8 from 7-8 pm to hear more from the organizers.

Please [register](#) to join the webinar.

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

Farm Credit Horizon Jump Start

JumpStart is a new and beginner farmer grant program from Horizon Farm Credit. Each year we award up to 15 farmers a grant of \$10,000 to help get them started on their agricultural journey. Applications open until April 19, 2024.

Shenandoah Seasonal is hiring!

An exciting opportunity to lead the production and daily operations of a 2.5 acre diversified organic vegetable farm. This is a year-round, full-time managerial position. As the Farm Manager, you are tasked with the management and execution of the overall farm business plan.

Small Farms Survey to Expand Conservation Cost-share Eligibility

We are working on trying to expand Virginia's conservation practices to include small farms. Currently, for Agriculture Cost-Share with Virginia Soil and Water farms are only eligible if they are five or more acres. We are gathering surveys from Virginia farms less than five acres, to provide to the Technical Advisory Committee, to try to get them to expand these services. Please fill out and share [this survey](#) with small farms (under 5 acres) or contact my volunteer fellow at (617) 708-4431 or by email anika.donohue@richmond.edu to schedule a time to do a phone survey interview.

Virginia Forage and Grassland Council's Grazier Mentor Network

Are you an experienced grazier ready to guide the next generation? Or perhaps a newcomer to the grazing world and eager to learn the ropes? We have 2 exciting mentor programs in Virginia that might be just the thing for you! If you're an established grazier, consider becoming a Farmer Mentor. You'll be able to share your knowledge, guide aspiring farmers, and even strengthen your own skills with professional training. We offer two different approaches to mentoring - a medium touch approach with a 2-year commitment or a low touch approach with a 1-year commitment. Both offer modest compensation for your time and travel costs.

US Ag Census Data

[Virginia Statistics and Results](#) are now available! The [US Ag Census State and County Profiles and Ranking: Market Value Ag Products](#) are also available.

Series

Farm to Table Webinar Series

You are invited to attend the upcoming Virginia Farm-to-Table Webinar Series scheduled for Tuesday, May 7 and Tuesday, May 14, 2024 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (EST). The webinar series features Dr. Elizabeth Heilman. Dr. Heilman is a Professor in the School of Education at Wichita State University and co-founder of Regenerative Wisdom. Dr. Heilman and her husband Dale Strickler live in Iola, Kansas a short distance from Dale's family farm. Dr. Heilman researches and teaches on how the most socially powerful belief systems are formed and the psychological, cultural, and political factors that shape them. Her current work focuses on what is most needed educationally and socially to foster sustainable human flourishing, which includes understanding the connection to environmental ecology, emotional ecology, regenerative agriculture, and food systems. In this two-part series, Dr. Heilman will focus on

how to root resilience in farm communities and strategies to empower farmer participation for meaningful and durable results. The webinars are aimed to enhance understanding among farmers, Extension personnel, technical service and cost-share providers, government agencies, nonprofits organizations, and corporations about the unique cultures and sociologies of rural communities that influence behavior, resilience, adoption, and participation.

360 Beef Discussion Group in Goochland County

Save the Date for the 360 Beef Discussion Group gatherings every month from 6-7 pm in Goochland County! May 14, June 11, July 9, August 14, September 17, October 8. More details coming soon.

360 Cut Flower Discussion Group in Goochland County

Save the Date for the 360 Cut flower Discussion Group gatherings every month from 9 – 10 am in Goochland County! May 17, June 13, July 18, August 13, September 19, October 15. More details coming soon.

An Introduction to Getting Your Hands Dirty (Warrenton, VA)

This program is offered by the Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer program and is a 6-week course with 2 Saturday labs at the Fauquier Education Farm. The course is intended for serious gardeners and Beginning Farmers who want to sharpen their production skills by broadening their basic level of knowledge of the tools and concepts of professional crop production. Classes run April 3 to May 8. Cost is \$100 per person or \$150 per couple.

Online Woodland Options for Landowners

This 10-week self-paced on-line course teaches the fundamentals of forest management. The 2024 class will begin July 1 and end September 9.

The Woods in Your Backyard Online Course

This course promotes the stewardship of small parcels of land for the personal enjoyment of the owners and improved environmental quality for society. If you own 1 to 10 acres in the Eastern United States that is forested or has unmowed natural areas, this course is for you. It is for you if you have a mowed lawn area that you want to turn into a woodland. It is also for you if you are a land manager or part of a group that manages natural areas, such as a preserve or a community woodland. This course runs April 8 to June 17.

4 the Soil Highlights



Episode 24-8: Calm Your Lizard Down with Dr. Elizabeth Heilman of Wichita State Part 1

Are you resistant to change or risk averse? You may need to calm your lizard down and understand how important safety and security are to change, risk aversion, and the adoption of new behaviors. Dr. Elizabeth Heilman, Professor of Education at Wichita State University, talks with Mary Sketch Bryant, Jeff

Ishee, and Eric Bendfeldt about how our "lizard brains" relate to farming and ranching. For farmers and ranchers, many day-to-day factors (i.e., markets, weather, public policy, etc.) are out of their control. The lack of control can cause stress and anxiety that activate our lizard brains.

Episode 24-7: A Passion for Gardening with Bill Paterson of Virginia USDA-NRCS Part II

A passion for gardening and tasty, flavorful tomatoes, cucumbers, and hot peppers continues to drive Bill Patterson's experimentation with crop rotations, mulching, composting, and winter and summer cover crops in his home garden. Mary Sketch Bryant and Eric Bendfeldt talked previously with Bill about his conservation work with soil health and grazing lands. Bill is equally passionate about his home garden as he is about farmers' grazing lands.

4 the Soil Blog

Check out the latest 4 the Soil blog!

April

April 18, 12:00-2:00 pm: VSU Trojan Farmers Market (Petersburg, VA)

VSU Employees, Students and the Public are Welcome! Shop Tasty, Healthy, Local Produce and Farm Products

April 18, 2:00-4:00 pm: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Ben Dukes and Derrick Gooden, regional program assistants for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, and Dr. Nartea, extension specialist for VSU Integrated Marketing Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

April 19-20: Women in Agriculture Gathering (Blacksburg, VA)

You are invited to join for the women in agriculture gathering. Registration is \$75.

April 20, 12:00-4:00 pm: Mother's (Earth) Day (Unionville, VA)

Discover climate conscious techniques, practices, and solutions in farming and your community.

April 21, 9:00 am – 9:00 pm: The National Urban Farm Festival (Brandywine, MD)

Don't miss the National Urban Farm Festival in Brandywine, Maryland. The day will be filled with fun, learning, and delicious food in celebration of the importance of urban farming. Discover innovative farming techniques, taste fresh organic produce, and connect with local farmers. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, there's something for everyone at this festival. Free for all ages.

April 22, 10:00-12:00 pm: Alpaca Familiarization (Moyock, NC)

Alpacas are members of the camel family, domesticated by the people of the Peruvian Andes about 6,000 years ago for food, fuel (dung), and fiber. Prized for their fleecy coats, they boast a variety of 22 coat colors. Familiarization will include information about breeding techniques, standard diet, socialization and demeanor, lifespan and lifecycle. A short walk around the farm will conclude this workshop.

April 23, 10:00-12:00 pm: Risk Management for Poultry and Rabbit Farming (South Hill, VA)

Poultry and rabbits are great animals to raise in a small area and with limited resources. Like any

business, cuniculture (rabbit) and fowl farming have risks to consider and minimize. We will cover different breeds of rabbits, turkeys, poultry, geese, ducks and guinea fowl, as well as housing, health, feed cost, marketing, predators, record keeping, personal goals, etc. This workshop will have a relaxed atmosphere, and you can bring your questions and related experiences about how you have solved high-risk situations associated with raising rabbits and poultry.

April 23, 4:00-7:00 pm: Skyline SWCD Field Day/Pasture Walk (Terrys Fork, Virginia)

The following topics will be covered: Pasture management, stream crossing, water facilities, and fence placement

April 23-25: Virginia Forestry Summit (Charlottesville, VA)

Join landowners and natural resource professionals from across Virginia for this educational and networking event.

April 24, 9:00-12:00 pm: Aerial Imagery for Farmers (Petersburg, VA)

This workshop will provide farmers and gardeners with an excellent opportunity to learn about the history of aerial imagery, how it has been used, how to apply it to profitable agriculture production, how it can assist in making real-time decisions on disease and insect issues, and how it can have an impact on forestry management and herd health.

April 25, 6:30-8:00 pm: Ask an Agroforester: Youth Education and Engagement with Dana Beegle and Ryan Huish (Virtual)

Join us April 25th from 6:30-8:00 pm for an Ask an Agroforester that focuses on Youth Engagement and Education in Agroforestry. Dana Beegle and Ryan Huish are joining us for a deep discussion about how to get young people involved and keep them coming back for more. If you're working with youth, you won't want to miss it! [Register to join.](#)

April 25, 9:00 -2:30 pm: Farm Finance and Conservation Planning Session (Blacksburg, VA)

The Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry invites you to join for a Farm Finance and Conservation Planning Session on April 25th, 2024 from 9:00 am - 2:30 pm. This is a free networking event for beginner farmers that will cover topics for farm financing options and cost share conservation opportunities. Find more information in the attached flyer. Please register by April 22nd, 2024 by emailing: Josie.Rao@Governor.Virginia.Gov

April 24, 9:00-12:00 pm: Aerial Imagery for Farmers (Petersburg, VA)

This workshop will provide farmers and gardeners with an excellent opportunity to learn about the history of aerial imagery, how it has been used, how to apply it to profitable agriculture production, how it can assist in making real-time decisions on disease and insect issues, and how it can have an impact on forestry management and herd health.

April 25, 12:00-4:30: A Tour of Urban Wood in Hooville (Charlottesville, VA)

Take a walk on the urban side and learn how trees and wood are used in an urban setting. On this tour of Charlottesville, we will eat lunch at, and tour, the tallest mass timber building on the east coast, the Apex Plaza. This is a 187,000 rentable square footage cross-laminated timber mixed-use building above a concrete parking garage at 120 Garrett Street in Charlottesville. The project represents the first large-scale mass timber project in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and one of only a handful in the United States.

April 27, 9:30-1:00 pm: SFOP-DCR Farmer Field Days (Reva, VA)

our FREE events to help you improve your farm and the environment! These farm tours will demonstrate how you can improve the health of your soil, your grazing animals, and the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Hosted by the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program and Virginia Department of

Conservation and Recreation, these private farms demonstrate conservation best practices such as nutrient management, cover crops, grazing-land management, continuous no-till, and nitrogen split applications. Access valuable resources. Discover major funding available to implement these effective practices.

April 29, 3:00-6:00 pm: Garden Variety Harvest Farm Tour (Roanoke, VA)

Garden Variety Harvests is an urban vegetable farm in Northwest Roanoke, famous for their salad greens! Farmer Cam Terry will give a tour of the farm. Networking social to follow the event with light refreshments to follow. Feel free to bring something to share. For more information, contact Mo McGonagle at Mo@leapforlocalfood.org. Detailed directions will be shared with registrants.

April 30, 10:00-12:00 pm: Spring Floral Design (Goochland, VA)

Want to learn more about floral design? Join us for a make-and-take course!

May

May 2, 1:00-3:30 pm: Farm Transition Planning – Transferring Your Farm to the Next Generation (Goochland, VA)

This workshop will provide information and guidance on the decisions you can make today to help you plan and achieve financial and personal goals for the future of your farm. This workshop will explain essential provisions you need to include in your documents to accomplish your objectives during your lifetime, when disabled, and upon your death. You will also learn probate avoidance, cost-saving, conflict-reduction, and privacy-enhancing techniques.

May 2, 2:00-4:00 pm: Farmer Movement Workshop with Labor-Movement (Dickerson, MD)

Join Future Harvest and Cynthia Flores of Labor-Movement at One Acre Farm in Dickerson, Maryland for a two hour movement workshop for farmers to help you understand how utilize BETTER body mechanics and movement patterns in order to increase productivity and decrease workplace injuries. Time will be spent in an interactive atmosphere moving through four basic movement patterns: hinge, squat, push and pull, along with the importance of core stability. Each participant will leave with tips focused on ways to improve their overall movement patterning and work-related well-being.

May 3, 12:00-2:00 pm: Southwest VA Friends and Farmers Lunch “Meat” Up (Abingdon, VA)

Gather around the table with your farmer friends and enjoy a delicious local lunch from Anderson & Sons Meats. Learn from agricultural experts about beef and pork carcass yields and how much freezer space is needed for a whole, half or quarter of these processed meat cuts. Our gathering will conclude with a brief tour of Abingdon’s newest meat processing plant.

May 3-4: Beginning Woodland Owner Retreat (Abingdon, VA)

Landowner Retreats are co-hosted by the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Retreats provide information on hardwood and pine forest management, legacy planning, management planning, and more. They combine classroom, field trip, and hands-on activities to teach concepts of sustainable woodland and wildlife management.

May 5, 1:00-7:30 pm: Compost Fest 2024 (Roanoke, VA)

We invite you to join us May 5th as we celebrate the opening of Roanoke's first Community Compost Facility. The Break Down is a day of family fun, new friends, compost, and learning. With a full day of Music, Learning Courses, and Family Activities, we hope to see you there!

May 7, 10:00-12:00 pm: Modern Chick Tractor Familiarization (Suffolk, VA)

Regenerative agriculture empowers farmers to use principles that improve land health. Come explore and experience the animal-soil-plants-human connection and its profound benefits. Learn about paddock rotation using small fowl and the intensive grazing methods offered by a European-style “egg mobile” chicken tractor. We will also discuss usage, design and layout of solar-powered fencing and how to use it effectively to protect your flock.

May 8, 10:00-12:00 pm: Introduction to Permaculture (Rapidan, VA)

Permaculture is more than a new system of recordkeeping and urban agriculture. It is an ecological design system based on systems found in nature. Patrick Johnson, of Nanih Farm and Garden, Inc., will lead this workshop. Come learn about the key concepts surrounding the broader aspects of permaculture: care for people, care for the earth, and fair share.

May 8, 10:00-11:00 am: Controlled Environment Agriculture (Virtual)

Are you curious about indoor farming, or is your farm limited in acreage? In this workshop, Dr. Kaylee South, an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist at Virginia Tech, will define controlled environment agriculture (CEA) and explore different CEA facility types and systems, including hydroponic production. You will learn about some of the benefits and challenges of CEA and look at current and upcoming resources for CEA production.

May 8, 2:00-4:00 pm: Soil and Water Conservation Service Information Session (Petersburg, VA)

The James River Soil and Water Conservation District is a subdivision of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, providing local solutions to support agricultural conservation in Prince George and Chesterfield counties. This session will cover the history of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, The Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Programs (VACS), and practices you can use to benefit soil health and protect water quality—these practices in cover crops, Nutrient Management, Split Applications, Rotational Grazing, and more. Qualifying practices are reimbursed at a flat rate per acre or a percentage of the project cost; others are eligible for a tax credit.

May 8, 7:00-8:00 pm: Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Grazier Mentor Network Webinar (Virtual)

Learning for most farmers is most successfully achieved by doing things hands on and with a more experienced counterpart. This is why the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council (VFGC) supports their Grazier Mentor Network where they pair experienced graziers with new or beginner graziers to help show them the ropes when it comes to successfully implementing prescribed grazing practices and techniques on their farms. Join us to hear from Becky Szarzynski and Jacob Gilley about the network and how you can become involved.

May 9, 9:30 am – 2:30 pm: “Planting Green” Workshop (Glenn Dale, MD)

‘Planting green’ is a no-till method of planting cash crops directly into actively growing cover crops - most often a small grain like rye or wheat - versus planting into a cover crop that was killed a couple of weeks before planting using herbicides or mechanical means first. Join Dr. Ray Weil and Cassandra Gabalis from University of Maryland to learn about their latest research on 'planting green' techniques and methods to mitigate slug damage in planting green systems. Training will take place at two field plots within the Central Maryland Research and Education Center, Beltsville Facility.

May 9, 7:30 am – 6:30 pm: Sprint Farm Market Tour 2024 (Petersburg, VA)

New and beginning farmers, ranchers, and military veterans are invited to take a bus trip to the State Farmers Market in Raleigh, North Carolina, to learn about retail and wholesale marketing of agricultural products. Participants will have an opportunity to talk with vendors and learn techniques for selling

products to the public. The farmers market is one of the nation's premier markets, with over 75 acres of indoor and outdoor specialty shops, restaurants, and a garden center that sells fruits, vegetables, meats and gifts from across the state.

May 9, 12:00-1:30 pm: Basics of Biochar (Petersburg, VA)

This workshop will be an introduction to biochar and its many benefits. Biochar consists of tiny bits of hardwood charcoal steeped in a high biological and microbial mixture. We will briefly explain how it has been used in poor soils to help rejuvenate microbial life and nutrient capacity. We will also talk about preparing and utilizing biochar to amend poor soil.

May 11, 10:00-12:00 pm: Fundamentals of Growing Garlic (Unionville, VA)

Garlic is a wonderful crop. It's easy to grow with almost no pest problems. It can be grown either in the ground or in a raised bed. October is the most popular month to plant garlic, but depending on where you live, you could plant sooner or later. Late September and October are the best times to plant garlic in the northern Piedmont. It should be done at least two weeks before the first frost, and must be done before the ground freezes. This workshop will teach you the proper way to grow and care for garlic during the season.

May 15, 8:30-3:30 pm: Dr. Elaine Ingham's Soil Food Web Transforms Soil Health (Roanoke, VA)

Dr. Elaine Ingham, widely recognized as the world's foremost soil biologist, is passionate about empowering ordinary people to bring the soils in their community back to life. In the morning session, participants will be making an active compost pile with Dr. Ingham and discussing the important details of making good compost, so dress accordingly. In the afternoon we will go into the microscopy lab and participants will have the opportunity to observe and identify soil and compost microbes that are crucial to food production, guided by Dr. Ingham and the Soil Food Web staff.

May 16, 9:00-12:00 pm: Precision Agriculture in Virginia (Petersburg, VA)

Farmers and Growers will have the opportunity to learn about the different aspects of managing their farm field by field and intra-field by using multiple inputs that occur during the growing season up through post-harvest, along with the aids to farmers that make the decisions easier to make, such as precise soil testing locations to determine intra-field variables, disease or pest test results, or pre-side-dress nitrate testing, which will reduce variability in yields and increase farm profits. Cost \$30

May 16, 5:00-7:00 pm: QuickBooks for Farmers (Catawba, VA)

Come join other farmers for an educational workshop to help beginning and experienced farmers learn to manage accounting and recordkeeping for their businesses. This workshop is presented by a local tax preparer and accountant with years of experience helping others while running her own successful small business. The topics to be covered include setting up financial records; preparing a chart of accounts; entering payments, deposits and invoices; tracking customers; creating estimates; reconciling bank statements; analyzing financial data and printing reports. Participants that complete the course will receive a one-year free subscription to Quickbooks.

May 17, 8:55 am – 3:30 pm: High Tunnel Growing –May (Way Barco, NC)

Join us at the NC Cooperative Extension Currituck Center for monthly High Tunnel Growing information meetings. We will offer hands on and in class portions of the day.

May 17, 9:00-10:00 am: Cut Flower Discussion Group (Goochland, VA)

In this training, the VCE Flower Girls, VSU's marketing specialist Dr. Theresa Nartea & Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent Erin Small, will share timely tips on pricing strategies and selling techniques for beginning flower farmers.

May 17, 9:00- 4:30 pm: Maximizing Daily Animal Performance for High Profits (Catawba, VA)

Join us for a one-day grazing school with Greg Judy, the Regenerative Rancher. Animal performance depends on them getting what they need to prosper daily. Learn from Greg about what to look for in your animals and your grass to dramatically improve daily gains and profit potential on your farm.

May 18, 8:00-5:00 pm: Agroforestry Field Day (Harrisonburg, VA)

Join for this agroforestry field day to learn about agroforestry and see examples in the Harrisonburg area.

May 20, 9:00-2:00 pm: Pond Management Program

Learn to control aquatic weeds, manage your fish population, improve water quality, and establish exclusion fencing.

May 21, 9:00-11:00 am: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Ben Dukes and Derrick Gooden, regional program assistants for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, and Dr. Nartea, extension specialist for VSU Integrated Marketing Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

May 21, 9:30-2:00 pm: From Farm to Market (Charlotte Court House, VA)

We will meet at the Southside Produce Auction. While there, participants will learn how the auction system works and how to safely deliver products from the field to the market, including loading, setting up, and packing systems required for commercial sales. Afterwards, we will travel to a local farm to learn about small-scale and commercial production. The farm tour will include crop production in both field and high tunnels. This tour is an excellent opportunity for farmers interested in taking the leap to commercial sales and improving efficiency and operations on their farms.

May 22, 10:00-1:00 pm: SFOP- DCR Farmer Field Days (Martinsville, VA)

Four FREE events to help you improve your farm and the environment! These farm tours will demonstrate how you can improve the health of your soil, your grazing animals, and the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Hosted by the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, these private farms demonstrate conservation best practices such as nutrient management, cover crops, grazing-land management, continuous no-till, and nitrogen split applications. Access valuable resources. Discover major funding available to implement these effective practices.

Summer

June 15, 12:00-4:00: Juneteenth at Sweet Vines Farm Winery (Unionville, VA)

Libation ceremony, ancestor acknowledgment, presenting of the colors, vegan food options, moon bounce, community discussions, business networking and community building.

July 31, 5:00-8:30 pm: Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Summer Field Day on “Summer Stockpiling to Extend the Grazing Season and Improve Grassland Bird Habitat (Swoope, VA)

The program will be held on Wednesday, July 31, 2024 at the Wheatland’s Farm at 304 Cattleman Road, Swoope, VA 24479 from 5 pm to 8:30 pm. Please save the date if you are interested in attending. Full registration information will be forthcoming later this spring and should be available on the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council website.

August 4-6: National Urban Agriculture (NUAg) Conference (Detroit, MI)

This will be a national opportunity to celebrate the advancement, investment, and dedication to urban agriculture. The conference will focus efforts to “bridge the gap” for all those working to advance urban agriculture across the nation by building stronger connections among USDA programs and the stakeholders that they serve. This conference will intentionally increase awareness and transparency about USDA programming and bring stakeholders together for training, networking, resource connecting, and relationship building. See the attached flyer for more information. Learn more about the initiative at: National Urban Agriculture Initiative (nuaginitiative.com)

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, sex (including pregnancy), gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.